



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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DR. BUMP TO STUDY EXOTIC GAME BIRDS IN NEAR EAST FOR POSSIBLE IMPORTATION

The introduction of desert-bred game birds from the Near East may be one answer to the need for better hunting in the semiarid, overgrazed lands of the American Southwest and the plains of the inter-mountain region, the U. S. Department of the Interior believes. To investigate the possibilities in this direction, the Fish and Wildlife Service is sending its foreign game-bird specialist, Dr. Gardiner Bump, to Iran, Syria, Turkey and adjacent countries.

Scheduled to leave the U. S. about May 15, Dr. Bump will spend six months in the Near East studying the various game-bird species that have adapted themselves to conditions of life in the rocky, arid and bleak lands of that region.

Not all of the Near East is an oven-hot desert, as some suppose, Fish and Wildlife Service officials point out. Parts of Turkey and Iran, for instance, have near-zero winters similar to those in Idaho.

Dr. Bump visited Scandinavia last year to investigate the black grouse and the large capercaillie. Specimens of these game birds were brought to Wisconsin and liberated on Outer Island in Lake Superior. There the birds have spent the winter under natural conditions to test whether or not they can find suitable food, withstand sub-zero temperatures, and keep away from predatory birds and mammals — all at the same time. If the capercaillie and black grouse prove adaptable, Service officials believe they may make a fine addition to America's game birds in many northern forests. The pheasant, it was pointed out, is an exotic bird, brought from Asia, which has been outstandingly successful in filling a habitat-niche not utilized by native game species.

The Near East investigations this year will not be concerned with migratory birds that would be difficult to control once introduced into America, Service Director Albert M. Day said. He emphasized that any birds introduced must not be competitors with native species nor likely to become an economic liability. There are, however, 28 species and sub-species of arid-land birds, and one or more of them may offer possibilities for introduction. These birds range from small, seed-eating quail to large turkey-sized bustards whose food includes grasshoppers, small snakes, lizards and rodents as well as plant leaves, bulbs and fruits.

Research in the Near East will include field observations and collection of specimens. It is necessary to know what food the various species eat, their habits and habitats, the types of diseases or parasites they may suffer from, their relation and possible damage to agricultural crops, and their ability to withstand hunting pressures. Dr. Bump also will keep his eyes open for desirable wildlife food plants which might be introduced into the U. S. through established plant introduction agencies.

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